



**2022-23 REPORT**

# Strong Workforce

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office | Sonya Christian, Chancellor





California  
Community  
Colleges

**SONYA CHRISTIAN**  
Chancellor

May 21, 2024

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor of California  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: 2022-2023 Report on the California Community Colleges Strong Workforce Program**

Dear Governor Newsom,

Pursuant to Section 88826 of the Education Code, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and the Board of Governors for California Community Colleges is pleased to release the report on the California Community Colleges Strong Workforce Program.

This report provides an account of the Strong Workforce Program for 2022-23, including details on its key components, investments and outcomes, along with a discussion on efforts to coordinate across other initiatives and recommendations for the future.

If you have any further questions on this report, please contact Vice Chancellor for Workforce and Economic Development Anthony Cordova at [acordova@cccco.edu](mailto:acordova@cccco.edu).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sonya Christian".

Sonya Christian, Chancellor

Enclosure: Report

**Chancellor's Office**

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# 2022-23 STRONG WORKFORCE

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Prepared By

**California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> . . . . .	<b>1</b>
<b>PROGRAM INVESTMENTS AND RESULTS</b> . . . . .	<b>1</b>
STRONG WORKFORCE PROGRAM FUNDING . . . . .	2
INVESTMENTS IN PRIORITY SECTORS . . . . .	2
STRONG WORKFORCE PROGRAM OUTCOMES. . . . .	4
Enrollments . . . . .	5
Progress . . . . .	5
Credential Attainment and Transfer . . . . .	6
Employment and Earnings . . . . .	7
Strong Workforce Student Demographics. . . . .	8
<b>LOOKING FORWARD</b> . . . . .	<b>9</b>
FUTURE WORK AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. . . . .	9
RECOMMENDATIONS . . . . .	10
SCALABLE CTE PROGRAMS FUNDED BY SWP . . . . .	11
Bay Area . . . . .	11
Inland Empire Desert Region. . . . .	11
North Far North. . . . .	12
South Central Coast . . . . .	12
<b>CONCLUSION</b> . . . . .	<b>13</b>





## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In 2016, budget trailer bill legislation (Assembly Bill 1602) created the Strong Workforce Program to expand and improve career technical education (CTE) at California Community Colleges.

The Strong Workforce Program provided more than \$1 billion in funding to the California Community Colleges in support of the creation and expansion of high-quality CTE programs that lead to living-wage jobs. This funding supports the goals of initiatives like the Vision 2030 and Governor Newsom's Roadmap for California Community Colleges, which aim to improve student success, reduce achievement and equity gaps and develop a skilled workforce in California. College districts and regional consortia invested Strong Workforce funding across a range of industry sectors identified as local priorities. Types of investments included upgrading current programs, establishing new programs leading to well-paying jobs in high-demand occupations, creating pathways to and from other education and training systems and strengthening connections with employers.

Since its implementation, the Strong Workforce Program has demonstrated encouraging results in enhancing the quality and accessibility of CTE programs at California's community colleges. Since the program began in 2016-17, Strong Workforce Program students have shown positive gains in noncredit student progress, credential attainment and transfer, employment and earnings outcomes, although equity gaps in CTE credential attainment are present for some student groups.

The Chancellor's Office continues working to improve opportunities for students through the Strong Workforce Program, including developing a new career mobility framework and adopting revised regulations for work-based learning experiences. The Chancellor's Office is also committed to leveraging data to assess program performance and close equity gaps, as well as aligning planning processes with the federal Carl D. Perkins and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs.

## **PROGRAM INVESTMENTS AND RESULTS**

Since its inception, the Strong Workforce Program has directed over \$1 billion to support Career and Technical Education (CTE) at California community colleges. The allocation of the community college component of Strong Workforce Program funding is based on regional workforce needs and performance on program metrics, with each region identifying priority industry sectors for investment.

The Strong Workforce Program also includes a K12 component. The K12 Strong Workforce Program (K12 SWP) is intended to strengthen Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways and programs in grades kindergarten through 12 throughout the state. \$150 million is allocated on an annual and ongoing basis to K-12 local education agencies (LEAs) through the K12 Strong Workforce Program (K12 SWP) to create, support, and/or expand high-quality CTE at the K-12 level (Education Code, Section 88827).

The goal of K12 SWP is to educate K-12 students and lead them to a postsecondary education, industry-valued degree, credential, or certificate and eventually, to employment within California's highly skilled workforce. The K12 SWP provides Local Education Agencies (LEA's) with start-up-like investment for creating new and innovative CTE pathways, thus building capacity to respond to shifting industry needs, as well as for scaling proven, effective CTE pathways.

In Fiscal year 2022-2023 the K12 Strong Workforce Program distributed \$150 million to the eight Regional Consortia for funding to Local Education Agencies (LEA's). K12 SWP applicants compete regionally, and a regional K-12 Selection Committee selects winning applications and determines their award allocation.

## STRONG WORKFORCE PROGRAM FUNDING

In Fiscal Year 2022-2023, the total community college component Strong Workforce Program funding distributed was more than \$275 million (shown in Table 1).

**Table 1: Fiscal Year 2022-23 Strong Workforce Program Investment by Region**

Region	Regional Share Funding	Local Share Funding	Regional Incentive Funding	Local Incentive Funding	Total for Region	% SWP Program Funding
Bay Area	\$17,223,420	\$25,835,130	\$3,595,912	\$5,393,867	52,048,329	19%
Central Valley/ Mother Lode	\$12,522,745	\$18,784,117	\$2,166,506	\$3,249,759	36,723,127	13%
Inland Empire/ Desert	\$11,392,443	\$17,088,664	\$1,640,220	\$2,460,330	32,581,657	12%
Los Angeles	\$13,578,743	\$20,368,114	\$3,878,472	\$5,817,708	43,643,037	16%
North/Far North	\$13,657,657	\$20,486,486	\$2,161,904	\$3,242,586	39,548,633	14%
Orange County	\$8,136,547	\$12,204,821	\$1,836,159	\$2,754,238	24,931,765	9%
San Diego/ Imperial	\$8,382,628	\$12,573,941	\$1,828,425	\$2,742,636	25,527,630	9%
South Central Coast	\$7,065,817	\$10,598,725	\$1,284,402	\$1,926,602	20,875,546	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$91,960,000</b>	<b>137,939,998</b>	<b>\$18,392,000</b>	<b>27,587,726</b>	<b>\$275,879,724</b>	<b>100%</b>

## INVESTMENTS IN PRIORITY SECTORS

The regional consortia are required to develop a Strong Workforce Regional Plan every four years and update it annually as a condition of receiving funding. Each regional plan must detail the names of the community colleges participating in the consortium; the consortium's governance model; an analysis of regional labor market demand; an inventory of prioritized CTE programs for investment; and a description of alignment to the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (Public Law 113-128). In their regional plans, each region identifies priority sectors in which to focus their investments. Table 2 shows how the regions distributed Strong Workforce Program funding to a broad variety of industry sectors. The data show that the regional sectors invested most in the Health and Information and Communication Technologies/Digital sectors. However, the Central Valley/Mother Lode and North/ Far North regions also invested significantly in Agriculture, Water, and Environmental Technologies and Advanced Manufacturing. The South Central Coast region allocated a substantial portion of its funding to Advanced Transportation and Logistics, accounting for almost a quarter of its investment. These regional investments shed light on how each region has prioritized funding to a particular industry.

**Table 2: 2022-23 Strong Workforce Program Investments by Sector, by Region**

Sector	Bay Area	Central Mother Lode	Inland Empire Desert	Los Angeles	North/ Far North	Orange County	San Diego/ Imperial	South Central Coast	Total
Advanced Manufacturing	9%	17%	10%	9%	21%	8%	11%	25%	13%
Advanced Transportation & Logistics	7%	7%	16%	1%	4%	11%	2%	8%	7%
Agriculture, Water & Environmental Technologies	5%	14%	3%	2%	10%	3%	5%	9%	6%
Business & Entrepreneurship	12%	6%	12%	7%	6%	6%	17%	10%	9%
Clean Energy (Prop 39 related)	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Education & Human									
Development	8%	9%	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	4%
Energy, Construction & Utilities	4%	6%	6%	6%	7%	8%	4%	2%	6%
Global Trade	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Health	16%	19%	21%	9%	15%	20%	16%	13%	16%
Information & Communication Technologies (ICT)/Digital Media	16%	8%	18%	19%	5%	12%	15%	14%	14%
Life Sciences/ Biotech	4%	0%	0%	2%	1%	3%	10%	0%	2%
Public Safety	7%	5%	8%	2%	13%	2%	3%	7%	6%
Retail/ Hospitality/ Tourism 'Learn and Earn'	2%	2%	4%	2%	6%	5%	4%	3%	3%
Other <sup>1</sup>	8%	0%	0%	40%	9%	20%	11%	6%	13%

To foster regional collaboration, Strong Workforce Program legislation splits the funding into two streams: direct funding to local community college districts (60% of the allocation, called the “local share”) and funding to eight regional consortia (40% of the allocation, called the “regional share”). —administrative groupings of community college districts established by

1 “Other” refers to investments made not directly connected to a priority sector listed. The NOVA system allows applications submitted to list priority sectors or “other.”

the Workforce and Economic Development Division of the Chancellor's Office for the purpose of coordination and joint planning within economic regions. The regional share of funding is spent in the service area of the colleges and used to incentivize coordinated regional efforts.

The investments made through the Strong Workforce Program support the development and improvement of CTE programs that align with industry standards, meet the demands of the job market, and support student educational and employment goals. The regional share funding is allocated to support joint projects aimed at promoting regional collaboration between colleges, employers, and/or other educational sectors. The regions can use this funding to finance cross-district initiatives, leverage economies of scale and support labor market data and research. Meanwhile, college districts have the discretion to use local share funding to support their colleges' priorities (which are still aligned with the regional plans).

Strong Workforce Program investments cover various areas, including:

- Upgrading current programs (such as curriculum development, equipment purchases and the implementation of work-based learning opportunities).
- Establishing new programs leading to well-paying jobs in high-demand occupations (including credit, noncredit, not-for-credit and apprenticeship programs).
- Creating pathways to and from other education and training systems (such as K-12, adult education, apprenticeship) and the workforce (through activities like work-based learning and career services).
- Strengthening connections with employers that will help guide program development and create a supply of work-based learning opportunities and job placements.

## **STRONG WORKFORCE PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

The Strong Workforce Program aims to produce tangible and sustainable outcomes that benefit students, employers, and communities by strengthening the linkages between education and the workforce, promoting economic mobility and supporting regional economic development efforts.

The Chancellor's Office uses a set of metrics to measure the Strong Workforce Program's effectiveness in increasing student enrollment in high-quality CTE programs that lead to employment in high demand, living wage jobs. These metrics include:

1. Progress towards outcomes such as student progress;
2. Increased program completion and transfer rates;
3. Employment in relevant fields and higher earnings.

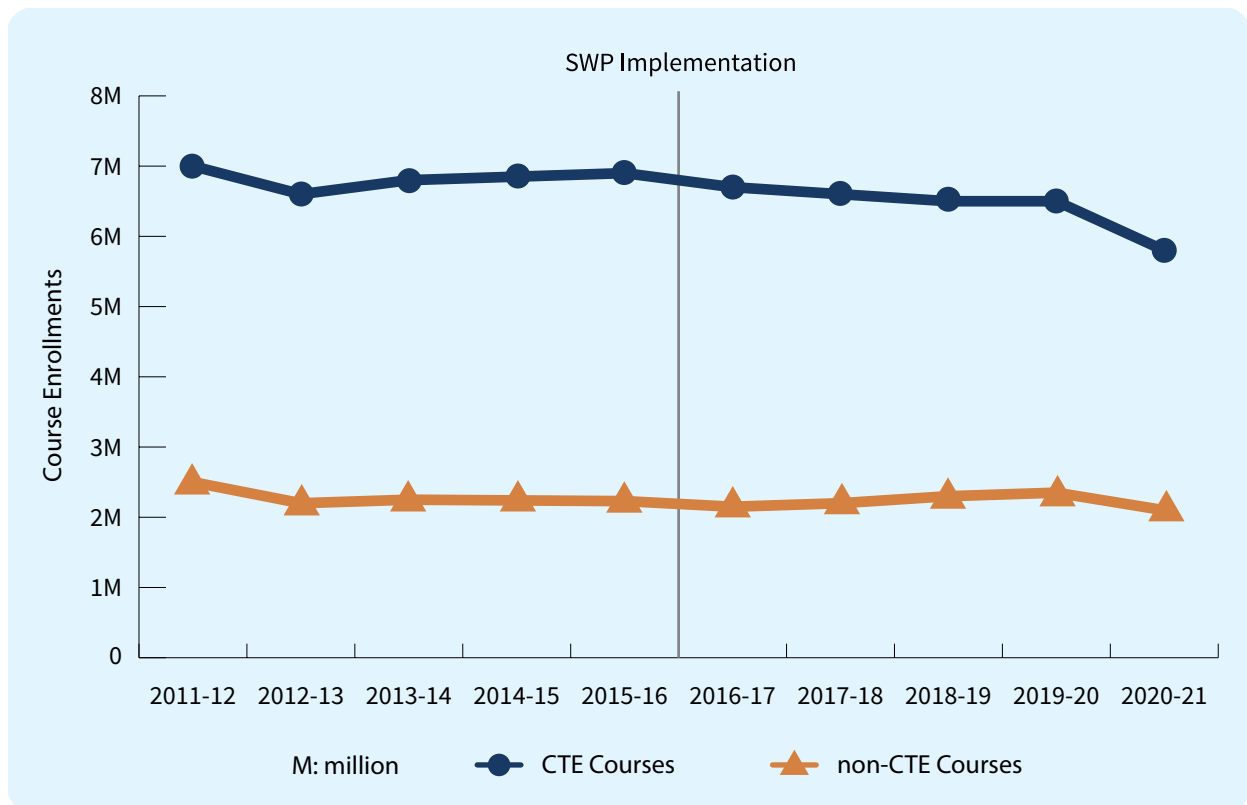
Based on the current outcomes, the Strong Workforce Program has demonstrated encouraging results in enhancing the quality and accessibility of CTE programs at California's community colleges.

## Enrollments

The California Community Colleges has seen an increase in CTE learning opportunities for students following the implementation of the Strong Workforce Program. Prior to its authorization, CTE course enrollments were declining, down 8% from 2011-12 to 2015-16. However,

following the program’s authorization in 2016, CTE enrollments increased by 3% as of 2019-20, while non-CTE enrollments decreased by 5% during the same period. Additionally, even during the challenges posed by the COVID pandemic, CTE enrollments decreased at a smaller rate (8%) compared to non-CTE enrollments (12%) between 2019-20 to 2020-21. Given the current concerns regarding declining community college enrollments and the forthcoming demographic cliff, CTE programs have the potential to help bolster enrollment at California Community Colleges.

**Table 3: Course Enrollments by CTE Status (Source: SWP LaunchBoard)**



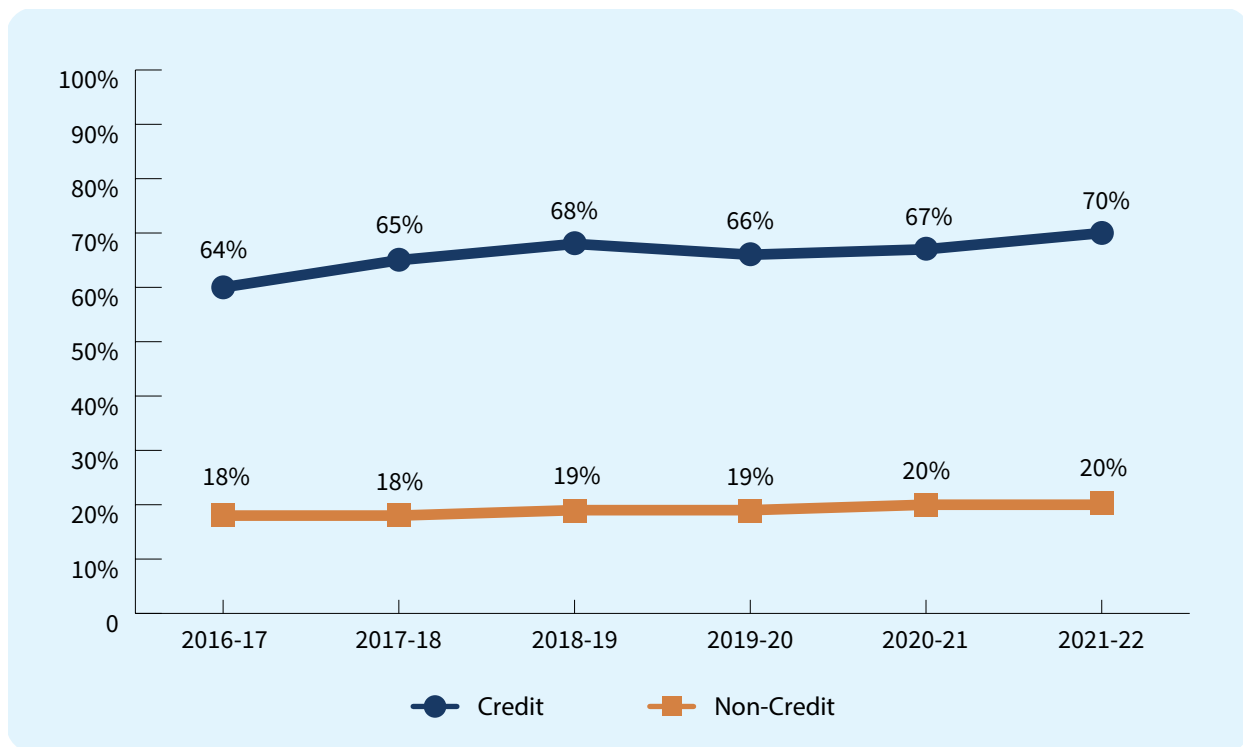
## Progress

The Strong Workforce Metrics comprises two measures of student progress, one for measuring credit and another for noncredit Strong Workforce student progress. For the credit measure, which tracks students earning more than nine CTE units in a year (in a single district), the percentage of students achieving this measure has remained relatively stable before and after Strong Workforce Program’s authorization.

In contrast, the percentage of students who completed a noncredit CTE course or workforce preparation course saw a significant 10% increase in the first year of the Strong Workforce

Program implementation, reaching 64% in 2016-17. This percentage has further increased by three points to 67% by 2020-2021 and an additional three points for 2021-2022, as shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4: Strong Workforce Student Credit and Noncredit Progress (Source: SWP LaunchBoard)**

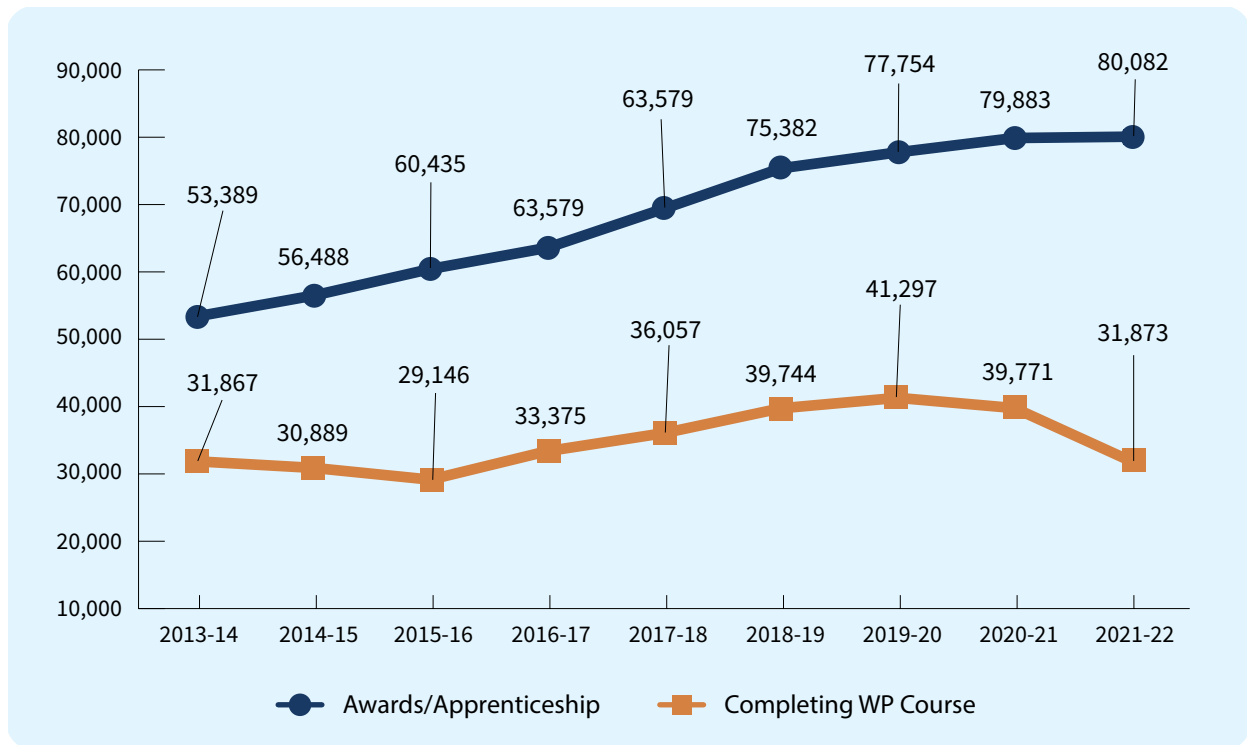


### Credential Attainment and Transfer

Over the past decade, there has been a consistent rise in the number of students in California Community College CTE programs who have earned various types of credentials—noncredit certificate, Chancellor’s Office approved certificate, associate degree, California Community Colleges baccalaureate degree and apprenticeship journey status—and who have successfully transferred to a four-year institution. This increase is likely due to several initiatives undertaken by the California Community Colleges, including the Strong Workforce Program, the Vision for Success, the California Apprenticeship Initiative, California Community College Baccalaureate Degree programs, the Associate Degree for Transfer, and developmental education reform efforts.

In 2021-22, nearly 80,000 Strong Workforce students obtained a credential (as shown in Table 5). Since the implementation of the Strong Workforce Program in 2016-17, this number has risen by 26% in 2020-21, with a notable increase of 45% in the number of students achieving apprenticeship journey level status. Regarding equity gaps in credential attainment for Strong Workforce students in 2020-21, there is an underrepresentation of students younger than 20 years old, as well as Black and African American, and Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian students. While female-identifying students attain credentials at a higher rate than other groups, there is no demonstrated disproportionate impact on male-identifying students.

**Table 5: Strong Workforce Student Credential Attainment and Transfer (Source: SWP LaunchBoard)**

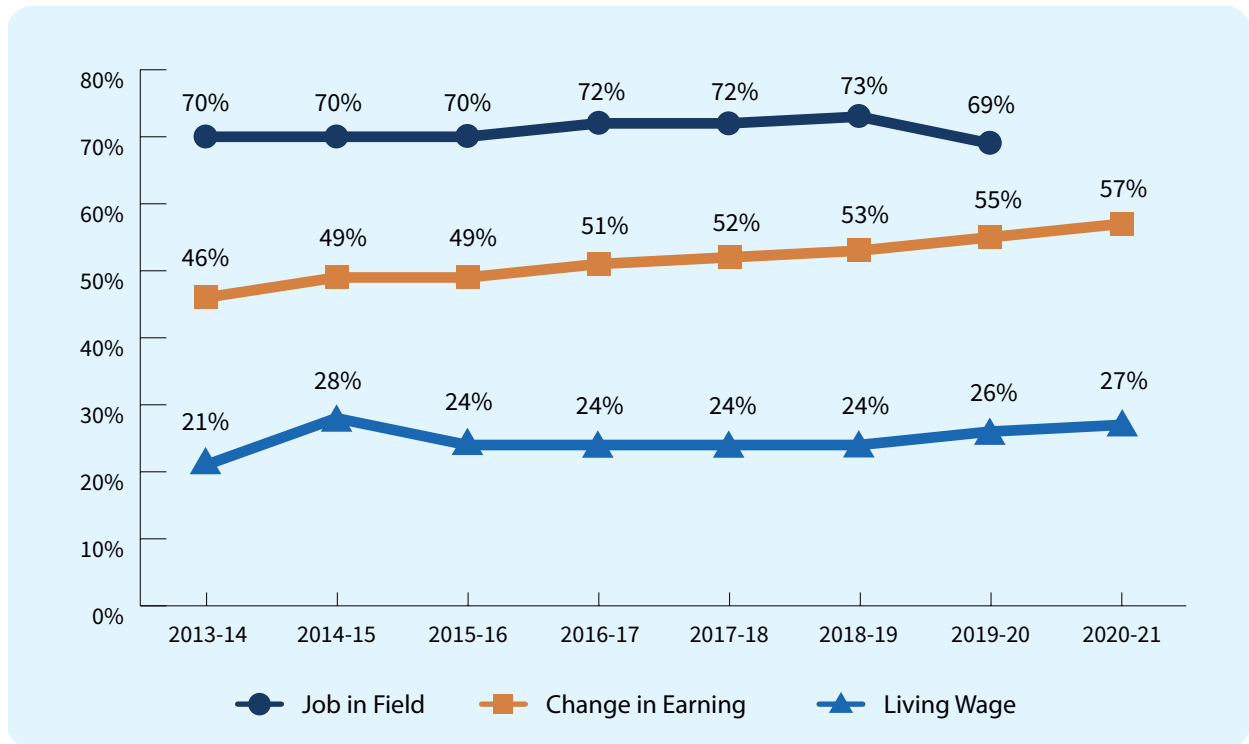


### Employment and Earnings

The Strong Workforce Program has made strides in improving the employment and earnings outcomes of its students, as evidenced by the data presented in Table 6. The percentage of students obtaining jobs closely related to their field of study has remained consistently high, ranging from 72% to 73% over the program’s duration, demonstrating that CTE programs are adequately preparing students for training-related employment. In the 2019-20 academic year, the median annual earnings of Strong Workforce students upon leaving college were

\$37,384, a 6% increase since the program’s implementation in 2016-17 (not included in the table), which resulted in wage gains for over a quarter of all students. Moreover, the proportion of Strong Workforce students attaining living-wage employment has risen steadily, reaching 52% in 2019-20. It is worth noting that the Strong Workforce Program supports a diverse set of fields and programs, and the earnings for jobs related to different programs can vary significantly depending on their industry sector and occupation.

**Table 6: Strong Workforce Student Employment and Earnings (Source: SWP LaunchBoard)**

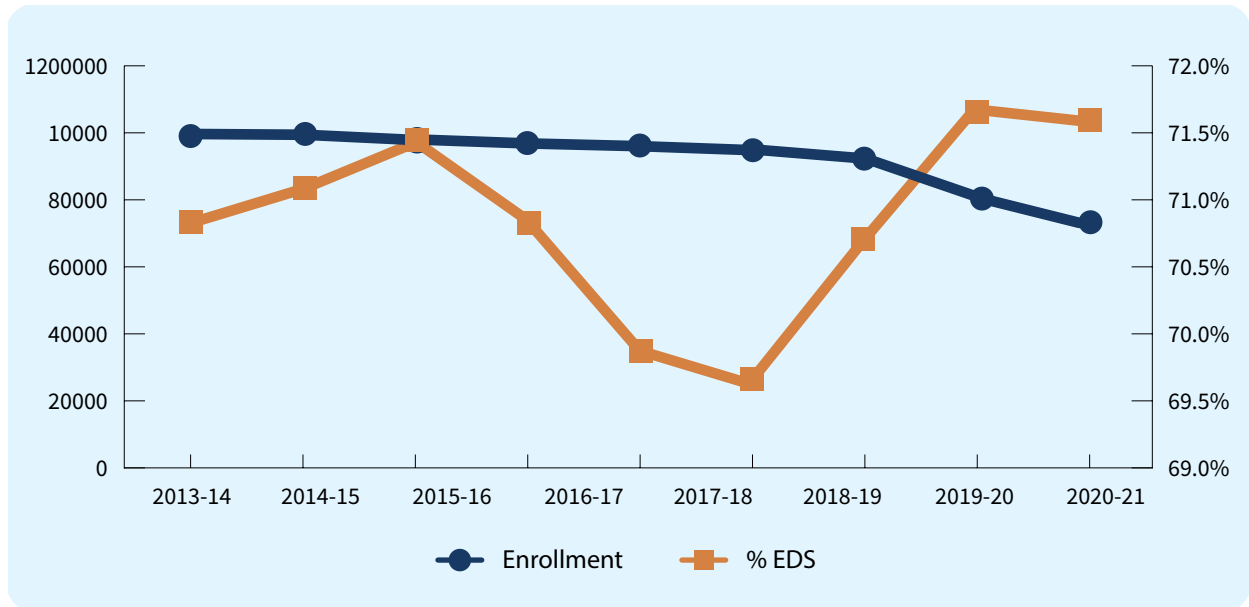


### Strong Workforce Student Demographics

While the demographics of the Strong Workforce Program students generally align with those of the overall system, over the last ten years, higher percentages (about 5-6% more) of Strong Workforce students were economically disadvantaged students than non-Strong Workforce students. In 2019-20, the program provided support to nearly 650,000 economically disadvantaged students, which accounted for a significant 71% of all Strong Workforce students. In addition, older individuals, as well as those who identify as white and male, are slightly overrepresented in CTE programs.



**Table 7: Economically Disadvantaged Strong Workforce Students (Source: SWP LaunchBoard)**



## LOOKING FORWARD

The past few years have brought unique challenges to our state, the California Community Colleges and our students. While community college enrollments have been declining for some time, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated that trend as other priorities took precedence over education for many students. Additionally, the shift to fully online programming at the start of the pandemic was challenging for some institutions and learners. However, this upheaval has also brought new opportunities. With elevated levels of vacant jobs in California and many employers dropping degree requirements for employment, California Community Colleges CTE programs are well-positioned to address these skills gaps and help regain college enrollment lost over the past several years. In particular, the Strong Workforce Program, which is designed to foster innovation, will be critical to creating and expanding these career opportunities for students.

## FUTURE WORK AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Chancellor’s Office is working to create more opportunities for the Strong Workforce Program to enhance career mobility for students and support a system of continuous learning.

Recently, the Chancellor’s Office has introduced a career mobility framework that focuses on serving students as learners throughout their entire working lives (such as through reskilling and upskilling opportunities) and providing them with access to career pathways that offer living wages and provide upward mobility. The funding provided by the Strong Workforce Program plays a crucial role in helping colleges invest in programs that prioritize career mobility and support a system of continuous learning.

To further advance the career mobility of students, the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges recently adopted revised Title 5 Regulations that will create more universal access to work-based learning experiences. These new regulations include requirements and guidelines for colleges offering internships, apprenticeships, and other forms of work-based learning. The regulations emphasize the importance of providing students with quality work-based learning experiences aligned with their academic and career goals, as well as ensuring workplace safety and compliance with labor laws. The regulations also outline the role of employers, faculty and college staff in supporting and supervising work-based learning experiences for students. As more students become eligible to participate in these experiences, the Strong Workforce Program can invest in developing structures that support the creation of additional work-based learning opportunities.

The Chancellor's Office is dedicated to leveraging data to drive the ongoing enhancement of the Strong Workforce Program. As part of this commitment, the Chancellor's Office has recently updated its grants management and reporting system, NOVA, with improved planning tools and additional data elements to enhance its ability to assess program performance. Furthermore, the office is prioritizing providing additional data and research support to practitioners as well as more assistance in interpreting, understanding, and using data to improve local programs with an emphasis on addressing and closing equity gaps.

The Chancellor's Office is also working to better align the planning processes of the Strong Workforce Program and the federal Carl D. Perkins program to enable regions and colleges to develop more streamlined, coordinated and evidence-based plans.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on a review of the Strong Workforce Program plans and progress reports and discussions with community college leadership, the Chancellor's Office has the following recommendations for improvements:

- **Expand continuous learning opportunities:** Colleges can leverage the Chancellor's Office career mobility framework and Strong Workforce Program funding to address the career development needs of students at every stage of their working lives.

The Strong Workforce Program can play a key role in this effort by broadening CTE offerings to dually enrolled K-12 students, creating more pathways from Adult Education noncredit programs to credit CTE, and offering more upskilling and reskilling opportunities to adult learners.

- **Grow work-based learning experiences for students:** Work-based learning experiences have demonstrated, positive benefits for students. With the proposed Title 5 Regulations to expand these opportunities for students, as well as other state initiatives like the Learning-Aligned Employment Program, colleges should further leverage Strong Workforce Program funding and the employer connections developed through the program to greatly expand high-quality work-based learning opportunities for CTE students.

- **Improve the use of data and research:** The Strong Workforce Program’s focus on accountability and transparency has increased practitioners’ use of data to make informed decisions about CTE programming. To improve regional and local processes, practitioners should take further advantage of the Chancellor’s Office’s dedicated resources and training on labor-market information and student-level outcomes data. As the Chancellor’s Office makes more data resources available, community college leadership, administration, and faculty should take advantage of them to identify areas of success and areas that need improvement.
- **Budget Recommendation:** Budget is appropriate for program activities. No changes recommended to the SWP funding formula at this time.

## SCALABLE CTE PROGRAMS FUNDED BY SWP

The eight [Regional Consortia](#) identified career technical education programs within regions and districts of interest to the legislative higher education committees which can be replicated or scaled statewide. All the scalable program examples were funded in part or in whole by Strong Workforce Program (SWP) funding. These programs are organized and summarized below by geographic region.

### Bay Area

- [Regional Virtual Production Academy](#): A film industry driven program with courses shared across six colleges: Berkeley City College, Diablo Valley College, Laney College, Mission College, Ohlone College and Santa Rosa Junior College. Virtual production (VP) is a process in filmmaking and video production that combines physical sets and actors with computer-generated environments in real-time. The course offerings are distributed across the participating colleges. Students take courses from multiple colleges and receive a certificate or degree from their home college. This provides students with a range of courses and instructors and attracts students from multiple colleges to ensure full enrollments for advanced courses.
- [Teach for the Bay](#): A virtual conference offered to students across the Bay region aimed to address the critical shortage of K-12 teachers and childcare providers lead by City College of San Francisco. The virtual conference option allows students from across the region to participate in professional development workshops and presentations with over 1,000 students participating in the 2022 and 2023 conferences. Antelope Valley College and the Los Angeles region hold similar “Teach for” conferences.

### Inland Empire Desert Region

- [Victor Valley College Workforce Development Center](#): A workforce training complex addressing regional economic needs. The Center includes a Health Sciences Academy, a Business Academy, an expanded Hospitality program with culinary components and a Logistical Transportation program to support a variety of aviation related programs

and logistics technology programs. The Center features state of the art training, facilities and equipment as well as short-term training opportunities and programs that provide degrees and certificates.

- [Riverside City College School of Nursing](#): Expansion of a nationally recognized nursing program with a pipeline approach to nursing careers with certified nursing assistant, then leading to licensed vocational nursing program (focus is assisted living and post-acute facilities) or registered nursing. In addition, Riverside City College (RCC) was one of the first in the state to develop concurrent enrollment partnerships with the California State University system and has an active RN/ BSN cohort. The SWP funding supports for expansion of nursing, and other CTE programs, is multi-tiered including working with specialty accreditation agencies to increase cohort size through curriculum revisions, demonstration of college resources, preparation and training of faculty, developing robust staff support for students enter and retaining through programs and a targeted focus on post graduate programs that give recent graduates time in health care facilities that offer a working interview. RCC is also one of only five community college programs across the nation to receive a Department of Labor grant for nursing pathway expansion, apprenticeships and preceptorships.

## North Far North

- [Lassen Community College Fire Tech Program](#): Expansion of the existing fire tech program to a forestry degree program, allowing students to diversify their firefighting skills and pursue a long-term career. The Associate of Science degree in fire technology is designed to provide students with updated skills and knowledge necessary to successfully compete for fire service positions. The curriculum serves as an in-service program as well as pre-employment program for students seeking employment or advancement in the profession of urban firefighting and wildland fire suppression. Core classes in the program are transferrable to the fire tech program at Cal Poly Humboldt supporting stackable credits for students to seamlessly transition into a forestry career.
- [North State Careers](#): A one-stop resource for students to browse industries and learn about job-readiness skills and education; browse college programs matched with students' career interests; and browse high school pathways with offer early college credit.

## South Central Coast

- [Cuesta College LVN to RN Program Expansion](#): Expansion of a nationally recognized Nursing Program serving students across the region to add an additional cohort structured specifically to support licensed vocational nurses (LVNs) looking to move up the career pathway ladder to become registered nurses (RNs). This program allows graduates to earn a livable wage in a high-cost area of the state immediately upon

graduation. This new pathway for LVNs can be expanded to other colleges in the state. SWP funding is critical to support this program expansion, funding additional classroom supplies, faculty and staff time for dedicated student success activities (academic excellence workshops, tutoring, study skills development, licensing test preparation, etc.) and test preparation courses.

- [College of the Canyons Advanced Technology Center](#): A world class-center that provides quality training in high-demand, high-tech fields (advanced manufacturing, robotics and welding) to serve the workforce and economic development needs of the South Central Coast region. In partnership with both local and regional businesses, curriculum has been designed offering pathways for skill attainment allowing students to enter workforce modeling skill competency attainment to career opportunities in accelerated pathways.

## **CONCLUSION**

As of June 30, 2023, the Strong Workforce Program has provided over \$1 billion in funding to California community colleges, supporting the creation and expansion of high-quality CTE programs. The program has demonstrated positive outcomes in enhancing the accessibility and quality of CTE programs, with enrollments in CTE courses increasing and students showing gains in noncredit student progress, credential attainment, employment and earnings. The Chancellor's Office is working to further improve opportunities for students through the Strong Workforce Program by developing a career mobility framework, revising work-based learning regulations and leveraging data to assess program performance of the program. In the coming years, the Strong Workforce Program aims to build on the progress made by colleges and regions in improving CTE programs that meet industry needs and promote the economic and career mobility of Californians.



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